UNITED NATIONS

World Chronicle

PROGRAMME: No. 525, recorded 25 October 1993

GUEST: **Nadine HACK**
New York City Commissioner for the United Nations, Consular Corps and International Business

JOURNALISTS: Sally Swing Shelley, Voice of Germany
Jon Leyne, BBC

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

NYC COMMISSION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

Nadine Hack, New York City Commissioner for the United Nations, Consular Corps and International Business, describes a variety of programmes her office provides to link the international diplomatic and business communities with New York City government, business and civic establishments. New York is preparing a wide range of activities for the United Nations 50th anniversary celibrations in 1995. The United Nations system, which is based in New York, contributes annually more than $1 billion to the city's economy.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration:	28:00"
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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**. Since its establishment almost five decades ago, the United Nations has maintained its headquarters in New York City.

With a hundred eighty four (184) missions to the World Organization and more than ninety Consulates General, the host city with the world's largest diplomatic community has established a special liaison office, the New York City Commission for the United Nations Consular Corps and International Business.
The Commission's present head, Nadine Hack is our guest today.

Joining me to speak with Miss Hack are Sally Swing Shelley, of the Voice of Germany and Jon Leyne of the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC). Miss Hack, welcome to World Chronicle.

HACK: Thank you.

LITTLEJOHNS: The United States has had, or the people of the United States have had a sort of love-hate relationship with the United Nations over the years and I suppose that this has applied also in the city of New York. How would you assess the attitude of New Yorkers toward the organization as we speak today.

HACK: I would agree with your assessment that there has definitely been a love-hate relationship but I believe that in the last two years it's come around the curve to the love side more deeply, both among the American citizenry and those citizens of New York City.

I believe that people are recognizing the role that the United Nations does and can play in the world, a rapidly changing world and particularly the post cold war world.

LITTLEJOHNS: There's been this roar over the policies of the United Nations in Somalia. New York City has a very large population of African-Americans. Has this impinged at all on the attitude towards the UN among this section of the community do you know?

HACK: What's particularly interesting about New York as the host city is that it really is a mirror image of the United Nations. The United Nations as you've said has a hundred and eighty four member states. New York City has a hundred and seventy eight distinct nationalities living right here within our five boroughs. One in every --

LITTLEJOHNS: Including Somalis, I suppose.

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HACK: Correct. One in every three New Yorkers is foreign born. And when I say foreign, I don't mean North Dakota, I mean outside of the United States. There, therefore is a constituency for virtually every issue that is discussed, debated and analyzed at the United Nations and I should say there's a constituency on not just both sides of the coin, but usually five or six sides of the issue being evaluated.

LITTLEJOHNS: And do New Yorkers follow closely events in the UN, do you think?

HACK: I think it probably varies and I think it probably turns on how directly it affects them. For example, if the United States is sending forces to participate in a peacekeeping troop, then certainly Americans and New Yorkers pay very close attention to those operations.

I think New Yorkers have always been very aware of the humanitarian activities such as UNICEF. Children in New York City grow up on Halloween carrying UNICEF cans around. And I think that as it affects issues that are of their own descent, people follow the issues and then, on a lighter note, people follow the issues that affect their daily life, parking.

SHELLEY: Well, how much money does the UN pour into New York because one of the things about the love-hate relationship is when Ambassador to Lichenstein wanted to stand on the long end of Long Island and wave the UN into the west and set into the setting sun into the east without realizing that of course the sun set in the west. He was on the wrong coast. And so how much would you lose if this happened?

HACK: Well, actually the United Nations being based in our city and in our country is not only a tremendous honour and prestige, but as you point out, it's a wonderful economic boon to our economy. The United Nations in direct spending equals over a billion dollars net annually to the economy and that does not account for the indirect spending of these fifty seven thousand diplomats and career foreign service officers who are based here --

HACK: Exactly. Direct spending of the system. Rents, supplies, services, etc.

LEYNE: But conversely, how much does it cost New York in the things like police protection, unpaid parking fines and so on and so forth?

HACK: Interestingly enough in terms of the police protection, something that our commission championed about twelve years ago was the Federal Reimbursement Act which we passed through the Congress. And every time you have something like the General Assembly and like the question of Haiti with people coming into New York City

and all the added police protection, we are actually reimbursed by the Federal government to the tune of about eleven million dollars annually.

And so that does not come out of the New York City tax base and I think that's an important point for New Yorkers to know, that they're not paying for those added cops out on the street.

LITTLEJOHNS: Does that cover all your bills for protection?

HACK: Yes, for security.

LEYNE: But have you really thought about the security situation in the UN which is really very bad right now if I may say so. I was out in New Jersey last week and the man said that when he was young, he came to the UN as a young boy, he was about forty years old and he said there were no police.

There were two guards at the entrance. He could walk in without any passes. Now we've even stopped the guided tours so one of your moneymakers as a commissioner is lost, isn't it?

HACK: Yes.

LEYNE: So have you ever given thought to for instance moving the UN to a part where you could have more area around it and not be so impinging on the city.

HACK: There are two parts to your question, the first part, have we given thought to the security issues. A tremendous amount of thought and a tremendous amount of interaction both with UN security under now, Umberto Ravalico and before him Richard Ward, with US Secret Service security.

With State Department security, with NYPD Security-Intelligence Division. There are about six cooperating security entities and the city works close with the host country to assure that proper security is given and, for example, in this recent session of the General Assembly, the city lent to the United Nations bomb-sniffing dogs. Which the city had and the United Nations system did not have. That's part one. Part two is about the tourists. We're very concerned as is the host country, as are many people, many New Yorkers who are concerned about - the UN is the number one tourist attraction in New York. People go to the Statue of Liberty. They go to the South Street Seaport. They go to the Empire State Building.

But it's still the place that every single person wants to go. And we are currently working with the appropriate Under-Secretary-Generals in the United Nations system to see if we can work out something so that an appropriate tour can be maintained without jeopardizing the security of the General Assembly sessions or the sessions of the Security Council or any of the other special meetings.

LEYNE: Does this mean you've had a difference of opinion with the United Nations over this?

HACK: I wouldn't say a difference of opinion. I'd say an ongoing discussion as to best handle this problem because we fully understand and appreciate their security needs and concerns given the latest round of threats and attacks that have taken place in New York City and so we're very sympathetic to their concerns.

It's not an adversarial relationship. It's more working together to come up with something that will both meet the security needs of the UN and still afford all the many visitors to New York and New Yorkers themselves, students, every single class in the public school system of New York at one time or another comes to and goes through the United Nations tour.

LITTLEJOHNS: Can I put another point to you. I'd like to be devil's advocate for a moment. As I'm sure you'll know, the predecessor of the United Nations, the League of Nations was based in Geneva and I wonder why the UN should be in New York bearing in mind it's a very expensive city as we all know. It's miles from most of the places the UN operates in. But above all, it's not really seen as a mutual place. It seems a place that heightens the role of the United States in the organization which is already dominant. So why should the UN stay here?

HACK: Well, as I said earlier when I mentioned to you that I really believe New York and the UN are mirror images. This is something I feel very strongly about. I don't believe there is a comparable city on the face of the earth that is as international, multicultural, multilingual as New York City.

And every single constituency that is represented within the United Nations is represented in our city. I think and I hear from Ambassadors and members of the secretariat regularly, that they feel particularly comfortable in their post here in New York. That sometimes if they're posted in another city, they very much stand out as being an unusual person in the environ, whereas here, wherever they walk they're just another person of another skin colour, another garb and there are many other people who are of another culture, another language, another ethnicity, another racial, religious background.

So actually, I think New York is the perfect place. Now as a tandem to what you've said, we at the host city are an entirely a political entity. Under the Geneva headquarters agreement, we have international legal obligations to serve all the member states of the United Nations and all the offices of the secretariat and all the affiliates.

And, we in fact, serve some of those countries that are not recognized by the host country. So for example if the Libyans, the North Koreans, the Cubans have a problem,

the New York City Commission to the United Nations is the place they can come to have that problem solved.

LEYNE: Well, you say you are neutral but there have been many cases when there have been problems with the host country. I mean for instance the refusal to allow Yassir Arafat here in the old days. Also now, when Radovan Karadzic the Bosnian Serb leader came, he complained he was only allowed a few blocks radius of the UN so the neutrality isn't completely the case is it?

HACK: Again there are two parts to that. You have to make the distinction between the host city, New York City which discharges its official responsibilities completely (a) politically and also in a rank lined fashion. We not only serve the Permanent Representatives and the Consulate Generals, but down to the fifteenth Minister Counsellor or whomever. And the host country which may in fact have outside of their host country responsibilities, as a member nation may have a political perspective on a particular issue.

We do not take political perspectives at the New York City Commission. We survey politically. And I forgot the second part of what I was going to answer, I'm sorry.

LEYNE: Well for instance can you have any say in allowing political leaders to come here and have complete access to the countryside?

LITTLEJOHNS: You advise the federal authorities.

HACK: You just kind of reminded me of the second thing I was going to say. We work extremely closely with the host country. We work closely with the host country division of the US mission to the United Nations. As I said earlier, we work with the State Department both the office of International Organizational Affairs, (IOA), and with the US Chief of Protocol and we're in constant dialogue with them about resolving exactly these types of problems.

But our jurisdiction and their jurisdiction is somewhat different and we are not a member state of the United Nations and we do not have a political agenda at the United Nations and so in a way, we have the luxury of having our hands a little bit freer and sometimes we've been able to be the middle negotiator to make something happen.

LEYNE: What are some of -

HACK: I do know now what the second point was. I think you would be hard pressed to find another country in the world where you wouldn't have comparable if not greater problems of who would be accepted and who would not be accepted. Where there would be challenges, to whose authority. I don't think the United States is sui generis in that.

It just happens to be one of the member nations which has a great deal of authority at the United Nations.

LITTLEJOHNS: As far as extraterritoriality, terrible word, for the UN is concerned, the United States has not gone all the way, I mean compared with Geneva, Switzerland, Vienna, Austria. The governments of these countries have given the United Nations much more extraterritoriality than the United States has been able to do. For example, you can get duty free booze in Vienna. You could even buy a duty free automobile in Vienna if you are associated with the United Nations. In fact I think even correspondents have that facility. But here in New York it's very limited, giving up on sovereignty so to speak.

SHELLEY: I'd like to turn a minute to your --

LITTLEJOHNS: Let Commissioner Hack reply to that.

HACK: Well, of course as you know, every Ambassador is issued a tax exemption card and has diplomatic plates and has certain - you know at one end of the spectrum, everybody is covered by varying degrees of diplomatic immunity depending on their rank.

At the other end of the spectrum, whether they're here in New York or anywhere else, they're expected to be law abiding citizens of the country and city in which they're living and in between you have juxtaposition of endless possible conflicts.

And we have tried very very hard to offer the full spectrum of diplomatic immunity and recognizing that it's reciprocal and that if we withhold any that our diplomats in other countries may be denied certain diplomatic rights.

So we've been very very sensitive to that issue both the host city and the host country and I think we've done a very good job of it, particularly when you consider that this is a much larger diplomatic community than anywhere else. A much smaller community physically. You have so many more people in a tighter space and so every issue becomes more complex. For example parking. I mean parking in Manhattan for anybody is a difficulty and finding diplomatic parking spaces are difficult.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is World Chronicle. Our guest is Nadine Hack, New York City Commissioner for the United Nations Consular Corps and International Business. Sally, I'm sorry -

SHELLEY: No problem. Because I wanted to actually just put a footnote on your question. You reflect in a sense the feelings of New York for the United Nations but you've also had very close links to the Clinton administration previous to your present job.

The US currently owes the UN four hundred and fifty million dollars. Have you been able to quietly behind the scenes put a little pressure on that issue? They have paid two bills but the UN was about to close its doors in August.

HACK: I know. I'm very aware of that and yes, in a short word, yes, I have been very much an advocate about the United States paying up its arrears and for that matter, all member states. And in fact I've just written an Op Ed piece which I am searching out a publication to print it which talks about exactly that point urging the United States to recognize the value of the United Nations and make good on its payments. And then that's setting a standard for other countries to do the same as Japan has just done.

LEYNE: Can I ask you just from a city perspective, does it make any difference who's in charge of the city, Democrats or Republicans? Do you think both parties have a similar attitude to the United Nations.

HACK: I think at this point they do, yes. This commission, you mentioned we're approaching the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The commission is in its thirty first year of operation. So we came in just two decades after the foundation, formation of the United Nations. And this has existed through Republican and Democratic administrations both federally and locally and given its apolitical nature, it will continue to serve the United Nations regardless of who is in office.

And I must say that I worked just as well with the Permanent Representatives of the host country under the Bush administration as I have under the Clinton administration.

SHELLEY: Are you having a fight with San Francisco about who's going to be the main focus of the fiftieth anniversary?

HACK: Oh, there's no fight. It's already been decided by the Secretary-General, New York City is the main focus. There will be a commemoration in June when the Charter was signed in San Francisco, but the major activities will be in October and in the months leading up to October 24th, 1995. Yes, for the fiftieth anniversary. And New York will be the central focus. Of course as you - I'm sure you all know, the United Nations is calling on all hundred eighty four member states to form national committees and have national celebrations and public relations campaigns and public information and school curricula.

And really bring an awareness of the United Nations to the citizens of the world. But New York will be the focus of activities.

LEYNE: Can you tell us some more of what will happen here in New York?

HACK: Well, it's going to be very exciting and our office will be very centrally involved and I am particularly excited about it. We've already formed a New York '95 host committee which will be made up of both a public component, city, and a private component of co-chairs and vice-chairs and lots of businesses, individuals, foundations and we will be focusing on three main areas. One, education for youth.
And we are currently developing a school curriculum and we're working in fact with the United Nations Department of Publications to develop that school curriculum which will be used through school year 1994 and '95 culminating for October 24th, 1995.

And the second is adult education and we're working with all the major advertising agencies in New York to put PSAs on television, on radio, on the sides of buses and to bring an awareness -

LITTLEJOHNS: Public Service Announcements (PSAs).

HACK: Exactly. And the third is a kind of celebratory events and we will throw a ten day party in the city of New York in all five of the boroughs and all these multicultural institutions that I've talked about -

LITTLEJOHNS: Is everybody is invited?

HACK: Everybody is invited. There will be an event for everybody.

LEYNE: Because I sometimes think that in a funny way the United Nations is in New York but not of it. A lot of people don't seem to know hardly anything about the Organization. Is that a bad thing and if it is, what should be done about it, what can be done about it?

HACK: I think that a lot should be done about it and this is something that I've taken on as my crusade with Mayor Dinkins very much as an advocate of this, to bring this diverse community of New York City and this diverse community of the United Nations more in contact with each other. We've launched a series of seminars that work in both directions. Seminars for diplomats to learn about issues that are of importance to them.

Health insurance, security, consumer issues and the list goes on. Conversely, we've hosted a series of seminars for elected and appointed officials of the city and the state as well as civic activists and Community Board Members to learn about the work of the United Nations.

And we've established a speakers' bureau which also goes in both ways where we have diplomats going out to the public schools and speaking to students about the United Nations. And we have people from schools and civic organizations coming into the UN and speaking to officials here about the work they do.

And our next programme which we're about to launch is to bring together constituencies that are doing similar work. For example, officials of the United Nations Environment Programmes together with environmental activists of New York City.

Human Rights Commission with Human Rights activists. Women's Commission activists with - and so forth.

LEYNE: This work has rather been undercut by the shutting down of the public tours that we mentioned at the United Nations.

HACK: Yes, but we've been able to hold these seminars in facilities all around the city. We just held one down at One Police Plaza where we invited the diplomatic community. To counter, we had Commissioner Ray Kelly and the head of police intelligence.

And they had virtually all of the key police departments briefing the diplomatic community on both personal safety, mission safety and residence safety so it doesn't necessarily turn on being able to have access to conference room 304 in the United Nations.

SHELLEY: What is the worst problem that you deal with? What is the hardest thing you do? What's the thing that you get up in the morning and wish would go away?

HACK: This is very hard answered because there are so many difficult things. As I said, with so many diplomats here, each of whom are covered by varying degrees of diplomatic immunity, but each of whom are expected both by their sending governments and the United Nations system to be law abiding citizens.

And abuses that take place in both directions. New Yorkers take advantage of diplomats. They see someone who speaks a different language, is wearing a different kind of garb and they sell them faulty products or they tell them that they have pay three years rent in advance or whatever and so we're sometimes dealing with problems that go in that direction.

And we sometimes deal with problems that go in the other direction where diplomats default on years and years of rent payment or huge credit card bills and the problems become very very complex. We've dealt with child abuse cases where we've had to very carefully negotiate out a settlement so that we wouldn't have the situation of diplomats abroad having their children seized from their family with claims of child abuse. So it's really quite an extraordinary spectrum of issues that we face daily.

LITTLEJOHNS: You know Jon made the point that New York is such an expensive city. I guess we'd all agree with that. But it's interesting that a lot of delegates who come here who have had experience of UN meetings or being members of

embassies or whatever in London, Paris, Bonn, Madrid, Rome, they find New York actually is not that expensive.

HACK: I would agree.

LITTLEJOHNS: I wouldn't say cheap exactly but cheaper than a lot of these cities.

HACK: Cheaper and certainly relative and with the current economy and where the dollar stands in the world economy more so these current days. And one of the additional - along with all these substantive programmes I've been describing, we also try to arrange a lot of fun events.

And they range from - we had a diplomatic arts day where we had over seventy five theatres participating, eighty museums participating. A series of other kinds of performance spaces participating and we advertised it throughout the diplomatic community for over two months and on that day, all you had to do was show your diplomatic ID and you could get into any one of these institutions for free.

You could see a Broadway play. We've tried to do things like that. Special showings of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey circus where we invited the diplomats to bring their children. So we tried to expose people to those parts of New York that enrich any New Yorker's life.

And make it accessible not only to those who can afford it but to all who are here.

LEYNE: Do you get corporate sponsorship for any of your activities?

HACK: Yes.

LEYNE: And is this part of the international business aspect of your job? I mean do you tap mostly companies that have international interest -

HACK: No, we have mostly New York companies to underwrite our programmes. Our international business component, everything that I've described to you that we do for the international diplomatic community, as of a year and a half ago we also do for the international business community.

There are twenty five hundred major foreign corporations employing over a hundred and twenty seven thousand foreign nationals based here in New York City and we have a similar kind of welcome outreach executive volunteer corps to integrate, help integrate them into the city of New York and learn how to work their way through the myriad maze of issues they need to deal with.

LITTLEJOHNS: Miss Hack, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of World Chronicle. Our guest has been Nadine Hack, New York City Commissioner for the United Nations Consular Corps and International Business. She

was interviewed by Sally Swing Shelley of the Voice of Germany and Jon Leyne of the BBC.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of World Chronicle.

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